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NSC BRIEFING

23 March 1955

**BACKGROUND - RECENT SOVIET MINISTERIAL CHANGES**

- I. Appointment of M. A. Mikhailov as Soviet Culture Minister, as well as failure during past three weeks to announce appointment of a new agriculture minister may indicate there are still limitations on authority of Khrushchev.
  - A. Mikhailov's appointment as successor to Aleksandrov, announced 21 March, has several curious features:
    1. Aleksandrov probably fired before 13 March. Rumors of removal circulated in Moscow early as 8 March. On 13 March, did not attend reception given by his ministry and probably already out by that date.
    2. Delay in appointment Mikhailov as successor may have resulted from disagreement among top Soviet leaders.
    3. Khrushchev's hand can be seen in Aleksandrov's ouster. Latter is thought to have been Malenkov man and was fired on grounds of not getting squarely behind Khrushchev's agriculture program.
  - B. However, this not clear-cut case of Malenkov man out and Khrushchev man in.
    1. Reason to believe that Mikhailov has been closely linked to Malenkov in past.
      - a. At 19th Party Congress (Oct '52), which brought many Malenkov men to top, he was elected to highest party bodies (presidium and secretariat).

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- b. Removed from these bodies when they were reduced in size following Stalin's death, but succeeded Khrushchev in key post of first secretary Moscow province party. At that time, Malenkov held three top posts.
  - C. In March 1954, Mikhailov named Soviet ambassador to Poland:
    - 1. Appointment came on heels of trip to Warsaw as member of Soviet delegation headed by Khrushchev, and latter apparently had hand in his assignment.
    - 2. This was considered demotion for Mikhailov. Appointment may have been device used by Khrushchev to pry him out of Moscow party post.
  - D. If this is so, Mikhailov's return to Moscow may indicate that Khrushchev is either willing to accept, or unable to prevent appointment to important posts of persons formerly closely associated with Malenkov.
- II. No official head Ministry of Agriculture since post vacated by Benedictov on 3 March.
- A. Conventional to designate successor simultaneously with removal Minister.
  - B. Post may have been filled without announcement or appointment possibly delayed pending reorganization of ministry (indicated by Khrushchev in January).
  - C. Khrushchev presumed to have special interest in this area and if post not soon filled may--like Mikhailov appointment--indicate that Khrushchev's authority still has limitations.

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III. In contrast, recent high-level promotion three Foreign Ministry officials--Kuznetsov, Semyonov, Fedorenko--were probably routine slot-filling. Molotov's position does not appear affected.

- A. Kuznetsov, former Trade Union head and Ambassador to China, promoted from Deputy to First Deputy slot, vacated when Vyshinsky died last November. He will probably continue overall supervision Western Hemisphere Affairs rather than assume Vyshinsky's former UN duties now performed by Sobolyov.
- B. Semyonov, former Ambassador to East Germany, promoted from head of 3rd European Division (Austria, Germany, Scandinavia) to Deputy Minister.
- C. Fedorenko, long time head of Far Eastern Division (China, North Korea, Mongolia) promoted to Deputy Minister.
- D. Importance of China, Germany, America re Soviet foreign policy reflected in these promotions.
- E. Kuznetsov, Fedorenko and Semyonov all members of Foreign Ministry's collegium, top policy and administrative body under Molotov. Will automatically continue on this body as Deputy Ministers.
- F. Gromyko (other First Deputy) and Zorin (other Deputy Minister) will presumably continue in these positions.

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